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The American Steel Navy

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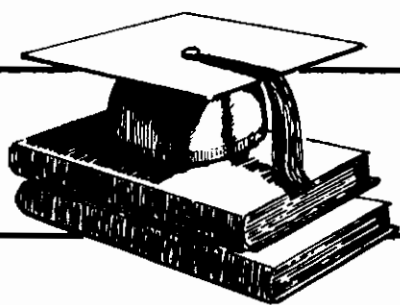
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PROFESSIONAL READING

Alden, John D. and Holm, Ed. *The American Steel Navy: a Photographic History of the U.S. Navy from the Introduction of the Steel Hull in 1883 to the Cruise of the Great White Fleet, 1907-1909*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press; New York: American Heritage Press, 1972. 396p.

In writing the introduction to a famous collection of photographs, Carl Sandburg remarked that the visual record was "a camera testament, a drama of the grand canyon of humanity, an epic . . ." Looking into the portraits and snapshots of both great and ordinary men, he understood their personalities and feelings in the moment that had been recorded on film. "Often the faces speak," he said, "what words can never say. Some tell of eternity and others only the latest tattlings."

So it is with this excellent collection of photographs compiled by Alden and Holm. Within these pages one can find views of the warships that served in the U.S. Navy between 1883 and 1909 and also a great deal about the men who manned these ships, the condition of their lives, and the world in which they lived.

Here one can see, on board the Presidential yacht, the earnest face of "Fighting Bob" Evans as he received final instructions for the Great White Fleet from Theodore Roosevelt. The reader looks in on a meeting of the General Board in a mapstrewn room at the Naval War College, the reading of regulations to a ship's company at sea under sail, divine services

on the deck of the battleship *Texas*, and the addition of a tattoo to an already fully decorated sailor. The glimpses of a seaman's life range from the galley and sickbay to "Sharkey" Smith's victorious boxing match on the deck of *Oregon*. Some faces reflect the painful regimentation of posed photographs, while others, like the impish grin of an apprentice boy in *Brooklyn*, echo the vitality of life across the decades.

The ship portraits by famous photographers such as Enrique Muller and E.H. Hart are well represented, along with views depicting the important naval events of the era: the Samoan Hurricane, the *Bennington* disaster, the sinking of the *Maine*, the Spanish-American War, and the cruise of the Great White Fleet.

Beautifully bound and well laid out, the book is organized into three major sections: "Ships of the American Steel Navy," illustrations of all the major ships; "Forging a Modern Steel Navy," a consideration of construction and repair, arms, engineering, communications, command, and the Shore Establishment; and "Men and Operations of the American Steel Navy." Following the main portion of the book is a 30-page appendix devoted to reference material: biographical sketches and portraits of important individuals, technical data, a typical shipboard daily routine, a glossary of terms, and 50 line drawing profiles of the major warship classes by Arthur D. Baker III.

Throughout the book great attention has been paid to technical details, ship design, and construction. In this regard,

94 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

naval buffs will find the book of great interest. On the photographic side, the work is excellent. With the exception of a misplaced caption (pp.42-43), and the lack of an illustration of Dewey drydock, little more can be asked. Certainly the tow of that mammoth floating drydock from the east coast to the Philippines in 1906 was one of the great feats of seamanship in the era.

The text which accompanies the photographs provides an adequate and generally accurate description of events. It is focused on technical matters and operational details. In this sphere it is excellent and well written, but the text provides little new insight into a complex era. There seems to be little appreciation for these years as seminal ones in a time of transition. This was a period of change in all aspects of the naval profession, and the new trends were characteristically reflected in the professional controversies of the day. In some areas the text omits discussion of some of these major debates. For instance, a controversy in training and education raged through this period. On one side were those who advocated training apprentices at sea under sail and steam; on the other side were those who promoted military training ashore in marching platoons. At the same time, the leaders of educational reform led by Stephen B. Luce promoted abstract, strategical education and practical application of theory. Others advocated additional technical training. The issue and the viewpoint expressed in this controversy were reflected time and again in nearly every area of the profession from ship construction and strategy to organization.

The battleship *North Dakota* is completely omitted, along with the violent controversy over her design instigated by Albert L. Key and William S. Sims at the time of the Great White Fleet's cruise. The "Key Board" and the reorganization attempts during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt marked

the end of this era and planted the seed for the beginning of a new period in naval management. This reviewer cannot agree with the authors' dismissal of the reform effort under Roosevelt and Taft (p. 242). The work of the Moody Board in 1909, the refinements to its recommendations, and the establishment of the "Aid" system by Secretary Meyer culminated in the creation of the Chief of Naval Operations in 1915. The drive for reform in the Navy Department continued throughout the period considered by this book. The early attempts and innovations in organization may have faltered, but they can hardly be considered "minimal or even regressive." Rather they were the foundation stones for an organization that was still being constructed in 1966 and is in use today.

In spite of these shortcomings, the book as a whole is valuable and worthwhile. With the authors, one hopes that its publication will encourage the discovery and preservation of additional photographic records of this type. Providing more than a mere gratification for the details of mechanical gadgetry, the selection of these photographs demonstrates a sympathetic appreciation and understanding of the Navy. Although concentrating on the forms of a passing phase, they succeed in presenting some of the eternal elements in naval life.

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Engle, Louise and Paananen, Lauri. *The Winter War: the Russo-Finnish Conflict, 1939-40*. New York: Scribner, 1973. 176p.

During recent years revisionist historians and politicians in Finland have come to view the two conflicts between Finland and Russia in 1939-1940 (the Winter War) and 1941-1944 (the Continuation War) as the consequence of a Finnish failure to understand the Soviet